

PREPARING FOR THE WORKFORCE: INDUSTRY SKILLS AND TRAINING FOR EMPLOYABILITY

Maria Cruz Santos

University-Batangas, **PHILIPPINES**

ABSTRACT: In today's rapidly changing world, learning is no longer confined to traditional educational institutions. Lifelong learning has become essential for individuals to stay employable and contribute to societal development. This paper explores the importance of acquiring knowledge, skills, and attitudes beyond formal education and its impact on employability. Employment growth is a critical indicator of a nation's economic performance, and the ability to adapt and apply knowledge in different work environments is key to individual and collective success. The study investigates the relationship between employment growth, innovative activity, knowledge workers, and labor employability. It challenges the inclusion of human capital and innovation measures in regional competitiveness indices when competitiveness is defined by rapid employment growth.

Keywords: Lifelong learning, employability, employment growth, knowledge workers, innovation.

INTRODUCTION

Learning can be obtained through various means and experiences as long as people would be able to gain appropriate information, skills and attitude. It is no longer confined to schools, for humans have to engage in 'lifelong learning' in order to keep up with the demand to maintain one's employability (Brinkmann, 2008). Application of knowledge to different work environment is the bottom line of how someone has to get into a large picture of the society making contribution to the development of the country. Employment growth is an important measure of how a nation or state performs in the economic equilibrium. Effectiveness of the immediate policy response and longer-term local economic strategies—may have helped to balance the impacts of personal attributes associated with workers' employability and their reabsorption into the labour markets (Bailey et al., 2012). Barkley and Dudensing (2011) found out that "there is an inverse association between employment growth rates and innovative activity, knowledge workers, and labor employability. These findings do not support the inclusion of measures of human capital and innovative activity in indices of regional competitiveness if competitiveness is defined as rapid employment growth."

Etzkowitz et al. (2012) noted that some industries have this kind of objective "to create a distributed undergraduate educational module that would introduce students to and increase their employability in emerging interface professions at the intersection of university– industry–government, such as technology transfer and intellectual property rights management, incubator and science park management, etc." It is always important for the future professionals to learn things about information technology as well as

entrepreneurship. Knowing how to apply these in the actual work environment would provide them better job opportunities and challenging role in the organization. The factor analysis of Barkley and Dudensing (2011) identified four factor groupings that reflect inputs to the competitiveness process which include innovation inputs, knowledge workers, labor employability, and entrepreneurial environment. They also noted that industrial specialization and industrial composition comprised the two groupings that represent industry structure that measures the entrepreneurial environment and industry structure. These factors provide better understanding of the situation on how to become a dynamic organization towards helping the industry and the economy to be more productive.

Stuart (2007) explored the challenges and implications, in industrial relations terms, of contemporary labour market policy with regard to learning, training and employability. The presentation of employability assets to prospective employers and the deployment of those assets, reflecting the individual's ability to act strategically in pursuing opportunities (Danson, 2005) is one way for the job seekers to be placed in the right position and employer. This literature review explores the employability and skills required of the industrial sector. There were 14 research articles filtered from Sage Journal database from January 2000 to November 2015 with the following keywords: 'industrial' in the title; 'skills' and 'employability' in the full text category. The significance of exploring labor markets and skills requirements of industries would provide better understanding for higher education institutions on how they will deliver quality instruction with appropriate student learning outcomes based on the needs and demands of the industries.

Competitive Skills Requirement

Possessing highly qualified technical or professional skills would provide better opportunities to be employed in the local community and abroad. Entrepreneurial skill is an important qualification or ability of the graduates of any college degree program to possess because the world is running through business perspective. Alonso (2011) emphasized that "the discourse of training in the context of a society which is uniformly presented to people in their daily lives as being 'knowledge-based', by demanding of them appropriate levels of employability, entrepreneurship and adaptability". Barkley and Dudensing (2011) identified entrepreneurial environment as one of the four factor groupings that reflect inputs to the competitiveness process. Students can be encouraged to take risks and become entrepreneurs while it is expected that they can acquire business skills as part of their education (Etzkowitz et al., 2012). However, the discourse of the entrepreneur is used misleadingly, as, in addition to a permanent readiness to keep changing jobs and to accept working conditions that are increasingly unstable and less and less well regulated (Alonso, 2001).

Etzkowitz et al. (2012) mentioned about the challenges of Knowledge Society occupations which is increasingly interdisciplinary in nature that requires cutting – edge skills and capacities. Personal initiative is necessary from the employees to learn new skills as they grow personally and professionally in the organization. Continuing development of expertise and proficiency especially in the field of information technology would give better opportunities working in a more diverse organization. Employees interested in graduate school as part of continuing professional education should engage in experiences like research, applied projects, conference presentations, or journal publications that develop relevant skills as well as build relationships with other members of the profession (Shoenfelt et al., 2014). Alonso, 2001 noted that "the motto

of ‘work for those who can work, security for those who can’t’, which is advocated by all the members of the post-neoliberal movement that came to power across much of Europe at the end of the 1990s, implies acceptance of the new philosophy that talks of the need to ‘prepare’ people for technological change so that they will be able to adapt as easily as possible to the demands of the labour market, using the above-mentioned euphemism of increasing employability as the basis for its arguments.” **Workforce Training**

The training allows partially structuring and regulating occupations by setting skill norms and conventions (Gray & DeFilippis, 2014). The identification of the significance of the individual’s employability assets, or personal skills and attributes (Danson, 2005) would give better perspective of an individual strength and weaknesses that will serve as the basis for improvements of one’s skills and talents. Direct employee participation takes place on the basis of a broad definition of participation aimed at drawing on employees’ skills with regard to both problem setting and problem solving in the context of organizational change (Telljohann, 2010). One of the key policy interventions was to offer training opportunities to workers to help them to reskill (Bailey et al., 2012).

In the environment of heightened global competition and economic insecurity and uncertainty, economies and industries need constant upgrading of skills to remain competitive and dynamic (Stuart, 2007). The lack of formal training is a chronic problem for workers in many low-end service occupations. It promotes segmented labour markets and encourages employers to structure jobs that only require low levels of skill (Gray & DeFilippis, 2014). Younger, more skilled workers and those who were prepared to commute further generally found work more quickly, whilst for older workers and lower skilled workers, successful adjustment was more problematic (Bailey et al., 2012). With regard to many of the training programmes dedicated to those who did not complete their school qualifications or equivalent, there are low or negative returns to investment for many of those suffering social exclusion or other employability obstacles, regardless of the regional or national circumstances (Danson, 2005).

The government has a responsibility of providing necessary training and development to ensure its people has necessary skills needed by both private and public organizations to cope as industries change, through high-quality, flexible education, training, information and mobility programmes (Bailey et al., 2012).

In terms of gender differences, the labour force was becoming much more oriented towards women, the low skilled, part-time working and temporary, low-paid and non-unionised jobs where career progression was limited (Danson, 2005). The support groups of local community members as categorized by more formal learning providers gives soft entry learning which aimed at improving confidence, skills and ultimately the potential of local people for employability (Braithwaite et al., 2007).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Higher education institutions may provide highly practical module which develops students’ entrepreneurial skills, employability, and abilities in idea generation, evaluation of ideas and communication (Etzkowitz et al., 2012). Continuous learning processes are necessary with the objectives of obtaining broad-based skills training for the labour force comprising social and methodological skills and general knowledge of technology and work organization (Telljohann, 2010). Employers may strengthen its staff development program to ensure the quality of knowledge and skills of its people are still updated and can still respond to the needs of global

market. Graduate school studies may enhance learning ability of the employees to keep them abreast with the latest innovations and techniques related to their field of specialization. Giving them a chance to nourish their talents and skills will make them assets of the organization. The negative impact of tight labor markets (the labor employability factor) on employment growth is mitigated if the industrial base has a high relative industry wage. A high value for the relative industry wage reflects high labor productivity for the traded sectors in the area economy, and highly productive firms may be less constrained by tight local labor markets (Barkley & Dudensing, 2011).

Transitions from basic to higher education and employment may be analyzed to explore the workless household in explaining employability problems and the tendency for problems to become concentrated in certain communities and among certain groups in society (Danson, 2005). Alonso (2001) emphasized that job seekers are expected to train, retrain or do work placements on their own initiative, and they are encouraged to respond to difficulty in finding employment by setting up their own business or becoming self-employed. Training needs analysis of the people is necessary to determine the areas for improvement among the employees. Identifying their strengths and weaknesses would create a better picture to develop a comprehensive development plan or program for the people to enrich their mind, spirit and interest to work productively.

REFERENCES

- Alonso, L. E. (2001). New myths and old practices: postmodern management discourse and the decline of Fordist industrial relations. *Transfer: European review of labour and research*, 7(2), 268-288.
- Bailey, D., Chapain, C., & de Ruyter, A. (2012). Employment outcomes and plant closure in a post-industrial city: an analysis of the labour market status of MG Rover workers three years on. *Urban Studies*, 49(7), 1595-1612.
- Braithwaite, R., Cockwill, S., O'Neill, M., & Rebane, D. (2007). Insider participatory action research in disadvantaged post-industrial areas The experiences of community members as they become Community Based Action Researchers. *Action Research*, 5(1), 61-74.
- Brinkmann, S. (2008). Changing psychologies in the transition from industrial society to consumer society. *History of the Human Sciences*, 21(2), 85-110.
- Barkley, D., & Dudensing, R. M. (2011). Industrial legacy matters: Implications for the development and use of indices of regional competitiveness. *Economic Development Quarterly*, 0891242410393951.
- Danson, M. (2005). Old industrial regions and employability. *Urban studies*, 42(2), 285-300.
- Etzkowitz, H., Ranga, M., & Dzisah, J. (2012). Whither the university? The Novum Trivium and the transition from industrial to knowledge society. *Social Science Information*, 51(2), 143-164.

Gray, M., & DeFilippis, J. (2014). Learning from Las Vegas: Unions and post-industrial urbanisation. *Urban Studies*, 0042098014536787.

Shoenfelt, E. L., Stone, N. J., & Kottke, J. L. (2014). Industrial–Organizational and Human Factors Graduate Program Admission Information for Undergraduate Advisors. *Teaching of Psychology*, 0098628314562683.

Stuart, M. (2007). Introduction: The industrial relations of learning and training: A new consensus or a new politics?. *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 13(3), 269-280.

Telljohann, V. (2010). Employee-driven innovation in the context of Italian industrial relations: the case of a public hospital. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, 16(2), 227-241.